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General and complete disarmament

Further measures in the field of disarmament for the prevention of an arms race on the seabed and the ocean floor and in the subsoil thereof

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum*

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* This additional information was received after the submission of the main report.

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II. Information received from Governments

A. Mexico

[Original: Spanish]
[12 August 2004]

On 23 March 1984, Mexico acceded to the Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Seabed and the Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil Thereof, considering it an essential step towards achieving the objective of general and complete disarmament. On that occasion, Mexico said it would have preferred a treaty that clearly prohibited the emplacement of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction in any part of the world. It considers the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, including on the seabed and the ocean floor and in the subsoil thereof, a step towards the universal prohibition of such weapons.

With regard to paragraphs 8 and 9 of General Assembly resolution 44/116 O, of 15 December 1989, the Mexican Government believes that States parties to the Treaty should give some thought to how the verification systems for ensuring compliance with other international legal instruments on disarmament could help determine an appropriate mechanism to guarantee full observance of the Seabed Treaty. To this end, the principle of verification must be taken into account, whereby the degree of appropriateness, effectiveness and acceptability of specific methods and provisions to verify compliance with the provisions of an arms limitation and disarmament agreement may be determined only in the context of that agreement.

Accordingly, Mexico believes that an evaluation could be made, through the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Organization, of the feasibility of applying the hydroacoustic monitoring technology of the International Monitoring System (IMS), which is part of the verification regime of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, to the case of the Seabed Treaty; consideration should also be given to any other specific applications of the International Monitoring System to this instrument.

Mexico considers that, given the recent developments in the design of verification procedures in respect of the Treaty, it is important to take into account the research findings in fields such as marine mining and research, sampling technologies and remote sensing for the exploration of the seabed, the ocean floor and the subsoil thereof, and systems for submarine test vehicles and multisensorial monitoring stations.

Given the current international situation, it is important to note that the vulnerability of marine areas and port installations to possible terrorist attacks is a factor that might encourage nations having maritime interests to develop, among other things, artefacts designed to offer protection from the seabed and the subsoil thereof, especially in view of the disproportionate gap between the low cost of making sea mines and the consequences of a terrorist attack on maritime installations. Mexico opposes any deployment of weapons on the seabed, which, while conceivably serving as a protective device against possible terrorist attacks, could have negative or even devastating effects on the world mercantile fleet and the marine environment.

B. Panama

[Original: Spanish]
[14 July 2004]

The Republic of Panama recognizes that the use of nuclear weapons poses an immense threat to international peace and security, owing to the lethal nature of these weapons. Although the Republic of Panama agrees with the view of the International Court of Justice that the use of nuclear weapons is not unlawful under existing international law, Panama's position has traditionally held the view that their use should be declared illegal. Accordingly, Panama has acceded to most of the conventions on nuclear weapons, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco), the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapons Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water, the Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Seabed and the Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil Thereof and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty. Moreover, Panama does not manufacture or possess weapons of mass destruction or materials or technologies related to their manufacture.

Panama bases its position, firstly, on the fact that the number of victims resulting from the use of nuclear weapons would be enormous. Secondly, by their very characteristics, nuclear weapons produce catastrophic consequences, which cannot be contained in either space or time: they have the potential to destroy all civilization and the entire ecosystem of the planet. The radiation released by these weapons could damage the future environment, food and marine ecosystem and cause genetic defects and illness in future generations; it would affect health, agriculture, natural resources and demography over a very wide area. The use of such weapons would therefore represent a serious danger for generations to come.

The Republic of Panama agrees with the view of the International Court of Justice that the adoption each year by the General Assembly, by a large majority, of resolutions requesting the Member States to conclude a convention prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons in any circumstance reveals the desire of a very large section of the international community to take a significant step forward along the road to complete nuclear disarmament.